(b) what were the issues discussed during the visit alongwith outcome thereof;

(c) whether outflow of refugees from Bangladesh to India has also figured in his discussions with the Government of Bangladesh;

(d) if so, what assurances were given by Bangladesh in this regard;

(e) whether review of the Ganga water treaty of 1996 was demanded by the Bangladesh Government; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (f) During a meeting with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, the issue of security of minority communities in Bangladesh was discussed. Government of Bangladesh reiterated that it was fully committed to the safety and security of all communities in Bangladesh.

The Ganges Water Treaty of 1996 provides for mandatory review of the sharing arrangements at five years' interval; the first review is due in December 2001 when both sides will exchange views.

Measures to boost bilateral trade and regional co-operation under SAARC were also discussed.

Harassment of Sikhs in America after WTC attacks

523.PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM:
SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA:
SHRI SUKHDEV SINGH LIBRA:
SARDAR GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA:
Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that after the World Trade Centre attacks, Sikhs in America were subjected to harassment and mistaken target;

(b) if so, the details of the affected Sikhs and other Indian citizens in America after the WTC attack;

(c) the details of the steps taken by Government to safeguard the Sikhs and other Indian citizens in America and UK;

(d) whether any assurance has been given by the USA Government in this regard; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Some incidents of harassment against Sikhs were reported in USA in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

One person, Shri Balbir Singh Sodhi, was shot dead on September 15, 2001 in Mesa, Arizona (USA).

Acts of threats and vandalism against Sikhs and other Indians as well as NRIs / PIOs were reported from New York, New Jersey, Ohio and California etc. in USA.

(c) The matter was taken up with the U.S. authorities at the highest level. Prime Minister expressed his concern regarding safety of Indians, particularly Sikhs in USA to the U.S. President. In U.K. our Mission took up the matter with the Foreign Office and the local law enforcement authorities.

(d) and (e) President of USA assured the Prime Minister that he will do his utmost to prevent attacks and harassment of Sikhs and other Indian citizens. Instructions were issued to the U.S. Department of Justice, FBI and other law enforcement authorities to provide greater security to the Sikhs and other Indian citizens.

Yasser Arafat's New Delhi Visit

524. PROF. (SHRIMATI) BHARATI RAY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether President Yasser Arafat arrived New Delhi on 22nd August, 2001 to keep India informed of the development in his region; and

(b) if so, the details of the discussions held at the meet?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) President Yasser Arafat visited India on 23 August 2001. He briefed the Prime Minister on development in the Middle East Peace Process and requested him to use his influence for an early resumption of the peace process.

Visit of Russian Deputy Prime Minister

525. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of EXTERN. AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Russian Deputy Prime Minister visited India recently;